
FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION

ATTAINING THE 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF GENDER EQUALITY

EDITED BY

**NAOMI
BIRDTHISTLE**

**ROB
HALES**

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality

FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION

Series Editors:

Naomi Birdthistle
Rob Hales



The Family Businesses on Mission series examines how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) can be applied in family businesses around the world, providing insights into cultural and societal differences and displaying innovative approaches to complex environmental and societal issues

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Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality

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About the Editors

Professor Naomi Birdthistle has entrepreneurship and family business running through her veins. She tried to work in her family business when she was four but was told she was too small. She came back year after year asking to work and eventually her grandmother capitulated and left her work in the family business when she was seven. After years of working in the family business part-time and having completed her studies at Stirling University, Babson College, Harvard University, and the University of Limerick, Naomi established her own consulting business, consulting family businesses in her hometown. She is now a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation at Griffith University, teaching future family business leaders and researching family business issues as well. Naomi is an award-winning academic having received numerous awards for her teaching and her research.

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About the Contributors

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Alan Reddrop has an honours degree in history from the University of Cambridge – and passed in the second class of the City & Guilds of London ordinary certificate in foundry practice. After a half-century gap, he returned to academia where he is an adjunct fellow at the University of South Australia – Business. In 2012, he wrote his doctoral thesis ‘Family Business Engagement’ (Reddrop, 2012¹) which explores the propensity – and frequent reluctance – of family businesses to seek available external advice on the challenges they face. Subsequent publications include ‘Family businesses-seekers of advice’ (Reddrop & Mapunda, 2015²) and ‘Listening skills: accountancy educators in retreat?’ (Reddrop & Mapunda, 2019³), willingness to listen was found to be diminishing, both co-authored with Dr Gido Mapunda.

Dr Bronwyn P Wood (Aisha) has a PhD in Marketing from Otago, in her native Aotearoa, New Zealand. She currently teaches in the UAE, has a consultancy, www.MuslimMarketingMatters.com, and is a Field Editor for the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship. With publications across the business spectrum, particularly in Islamic Marketing and Women’s Entrepreneurship, Dr Wood applies her varied experience to perceptual and epistemological discussions of meaning and well-being. Her interest areas include non-hegemonic methodologies, decolonization, social justice and social and economic sustainability.

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¹Reddrop, A. (2012). *Family business engagement*. School of Management. University of South Australia.

²Reddrop, A., & Mapunda, G. (2015). Family businesses: Seekers of advice. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 5(1), 90–115.

³Reddrop, A., & Mapunda, G. (2019). Listening skills: Accountancy educators in retreat? *Australasian Accounting Business & Finance Journal*, 13(1), 76–89.

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Foreword

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Chair, Inter-University Sustainable Development Research Programme

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 provide a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They also entail elements of importance towards a strategic business engagement with sustainability issues. These offer a framework which provides businesses with a systematic approach to identify new business opportunities whilst contributing to the solution of the grand sustainability challenges facing the world today, including climate change. Each SDG, if achieved, will have a direct and significant positive impact on millions of people's lives around the world and the environment in which they live. Businesses have an opportunity to widen the purpose of business through adopting the SDGs as targets for their operations. Thus, they can make a meaningful contribution to the greater good through achieving their operational objectives.

Family businesses are uniquely placed to contribute to SDGs for many reasons. Firstly, because family business models have longer time perspectives, and this allows the family business to link with the longer term SDG time frame – 2030. Second, family businesses often focus on aspects of business operation which do not have an immediate return on investment such as relationship building with stakeholder groups. Thirdly, family businesses tend to rate the importance of ethics higher than standard businesses and thus align well with the social dimensions of the SDGs. Lastly, family businesses have intergenerational perspectives which is a core principle of sustainability.

This book provides insights into how family business operationalises SDG#5: Gender Equality. This book uses a rigorous case study approach for family businesses to detail aspects of their business which help to advance gender equality. The cases provided here are living proof that the family business that operate for the greater good actually work! Non-family businesses can take a leaf out of the family businesses portrayed in this book as they can provide different perspectives on how businesses can successfully align SDGs and business strategy.

Despite many businesses having adopted environmental social governance strategies and environmental management systems, the effect of this activity has not been reflected in a healthier planet. Many 'state of the environment' reports indicate that planetary health is decreasing, and planetary boundaries are being crossed or are

about to be crossed. Whilst the cause of this decline is not entirely the fault of business, there still needs to be a greater effort to address the decline. The challenge for family businesses is to use their unique characteristics and set ambitious programmes of work that make a meaningful contribution to achieving global goals. This book provides insights into how family businesses can achieve such a mission and how non-family businesses can be inspired to do the same.

Acknowledgements

The Editors would like to thank the contributors of the book for providing insights and sharing learnings from their business practice. We acknowledge that writing up cases in the format required considerable time and effort. The quality of the cases presented is testament to their efforts.

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Chapter 1

The Sustainable Development Goals – SDG#5 Gender Equality

Rob Hales and Naomi Birdthistle

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015, is a shared blueprint for people and the planet, intending to achieve peace and prosperity for all. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a call to action, to develop innovative solutions to some of the world's most complex, societal, and environmental challenges. Businesses play a crucial role in forging this path, and since family businesses account for more than two-thirds of businesses worldwide and contribute to 70–90% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), we believe it is important to showcase the role they play in facilitating the achievement of these SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a call to action for all countries to address 'the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice'. These challenges are identified by 17 SDGs as depicted in [Fig. 1](#) and within the SDGs are a total of 169 targets. These 17 SDGs acknowledge that ending poverty and other global challenges need strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests ([United Nations, 2021](#)).

This book makes an important contribution to research on family businesses by highlighting how businesses can make valuable contributions towards sustainable development and in particular SDG#5 Gender Equality. There are several streams of research emerging in the literature on family business and sustainability that are relevant to this book. [Ferreira et al. \(2021\)](#) identify four streams of research in family business and sustainability: family business capital,

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Fig. 1. 17 Sustainable Development Goals. *Source: United Nations (2021).*¹

family business strategy, family business social responsibility, and family business succession. The case study approach of this book provides insights into how SDGs can be used to advance the family business’s sustainability strategy and social responsibility concerning Gender Equality. How a family’s trans-generational sustainability intentions positively influence the strategy of the business and the family’s concern for its reputation has been identified as a driver of sustainability in family businesses. Additionally, family businesses routinely combine innovation and tradition to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

The COVID-19 pandemic had the effect of demonstrating that family businesses are more resilient and operate more sustainably than standard businesses (such as the shareholder approach). The reason for this lies in family businesses generally taking a long-term perspective on stakeholder relationships and the real need for long-term continuity planning to sustain the people within their businesses. The people in their business are most likely to be family members – women being an important part of the leadership of many family businesses. However, like all businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic placed financial pressures on family businesses. One needs to ask the question: *How then can family businesses extend their capacity to operate more sustainably and with more social impact during times of business stress?* Well, family businesses can offer unique insights into how sustainability and social impact can be part of the regenerative response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the regenerative response to sustainability challenges. The idea for the book came from two observations. The first observation was that family businesses that had sustainability at their core were performing well despite the impacts of the pandemic. The second observation was

that the SDGs were being used as a framework for regeneration after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has presented challenges to those working towards achieving the goals. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are predicted to increase the divide between people living in rich and poor countries (UNEP, 2020). However, if there can be concerted action using the blueprint of the SDGs, then human development can exceed pre-COVID development trajectories (UNEP, 2021). What is needed is a combination of political commitment from all levels of government, investment in green economy initiatives, socially oriented innovation and a (re)focus on the purpose of business to align with SDGs. Fig. 1 shows the 17 SDGs.

The importance of family businesses in their contribution to SDGs can be envisaged in several ways. Firstly, many family business owners emphasise that the SDGs align with their core values and legacy-building efforts. They use the goals as a chance to align their business activities with a greater purpose and create a positive impact in their communities. Because of the nature of family businesses, they adopt a business purpose that provides a legacy for future generations. This results in a long-term perspective on business development and strategy. Family businesses also recognise that addressing the SDGs can enhance relationships with stakeholders, including customers, employees and local communities. Contributing to the achievement of the SDGs can foster goodwill and strengthen their reputation because of the external focus on global goals as opposed to just their own business goals (Barrett, 2017).

For family business owners who seek to transform their business models, the SDGs are a source of inspiration for innovation. The integration of sustainability into their business strategies can lead to the development of innovative products, services and business models that contribute to the greater good as well as create business value. Family business owners also use SDGs to identify and mitigate risks associated with environmental, social and governance issues. By addressing these challenges as a future-oriented strategy, they aim to ensure the resilience and long-term success of their businesses (Bauweraerts et al., 2022; Muhmad & Muhamad, 2021). Family businesses that are aligned with the SDGs are more likely to have a positive impact on their financial performance (Muhmad & Muhamad, 2021). Consumers and investors increasingly favour companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Lastly, many family businesses see themselves as ethical leaders, and their commitment to ethical decision-making and responsible business conduct is enacted through business alignment and contribution to SDGs.

Book Series Focus – SDG#5

This book focuses on SDG number 5 (SDG#5) which focuses on Gender Equality. The main targets within SDG#5 are shown below in Table 1.

While these targets may appear abstract to many family businesses through careful analysis, specific actions of business can contribute to the targets above. The targets are designed to be aspirational targets for countries, but businesses

Table 1. SDG #5 Targets.

5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
5.4	Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Source: [United Nations \(n.d.\)](#).

can make a valuable contribution to these targets and specifically advance gender equity. Each of the targets will be examined and suggested contributions that family businesses can make are provided.

Target 5.1 – End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. An important contribution is that family businesses can create inclusive and non-discriminatory workplaces where women have equal

opportunities and are treated fairly. They can implement policies that prevent gender-based discrimination in hiring, promotion and compensation. In addition, they can provide equal training and development opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender.

Target 5.2 – Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres. Family businesses can promote a safe and respectful work environment that prevents harassment and violence. Family businesses can establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and violence. Provide training to employees on recognising and addressing gender-based violence. Support anti-violence campaigns and initiatives.

Target 5.3 – Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Family businesses may not have a direct influence on this target; they can consider supply chain impacts. Family businesses can engage with suppliers to ensure that their operations align with the principles of gender equality and human rights. By adopting responsible sourcing practices, family businesses can contribute to a broader movement that seeks to eliminate harmful practices from various industries.

Target 5.4 – Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work. As a result of family businesses having employees that are ‘family’, family businesses are predisposed to support work–life balance for both women and men and encourage shared caregiving responsibilities. Family businesses that are aware of these issues offer flexible working arrangements, parental leave and childcare support. The businesses also promote the importance of valuing and sharing caregiving responsibilities within families.

Target 5.5 – Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership. Women’s leadership and participation in decision-making is an important hallmark of many family businesses and is important in contributing to SDG#5. These businesses actively encourage and support women’s advancement into leadership roles within the business. They also provide mentorship, training and networking opportunities for women employees. If these actions are taken on a national scale in family businesses, then the impact becomes significant for their contribution to national SDG targets.

Target 5.6 – Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Depending on the country where the family business is located, the business can ensure that their employees have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. They can also provide health insurance coverage that includes health services and educational services for women and girls.

Target 5. a-b-c – Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources. Family businesses are often at the forefront of business advocating and promoting economic empowerment for women within their workforce and communities. They not only ensure equal pay for equal work but can also support women’s entrepreneurship by providing training, access to financing and business development resources within their organisations. Advocating for sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality is also something that many family businesses undertake.

Family businesses can contribute to these SDG#5 targets by integrating gender equality principles into their organisational culture, policies and practices. By fostering an environment of inclusivity, fairness and empowerment, family businesses can play a vital role in advancing gender equality and creating a positive impact on their employees, families and communities.

The above list provides a framework for how family businesses can focus and potentially repurpose strategies to achieve sustainability actions that align with the SDGs. Progressive family businesses that have a focus on sustainability and social responsibility are likely to already be focusing on such priorities but may not realise they contribute to a country's SDG targets and in particular SDG#5.

Challenges Facing Businesses in the Achievement of SDG#5

While having the potential to contribute to the achievement of SDG#5 related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, family businesses may also encounter several challenges in their efforts. Family businesses may operate within cultural contexts where traditional gender roles and norms persist that hinder the adoption and commitment to the goal. In such situations, challenging these norms and promoting gender equality in a family business might face resistance from other family members, employees and the broader community. Succession is also an issue for SDG#5. Family businesses often face succession challenges, and traditional male-dominated values and attitudes might influence decisions about who takes over leadership roles. How to break the cycle of male-dominated leadership is a key question for equal opportunities for women in leadership. Family businesses often demand significant time and commitment, which can create challenges for women seeking a work–life balance. This is especially the case if caregiving responsibilities are disproportionately placed on them, and there are no equitable systems of caregiving to counter this impact.

There also might be limited access to education and training opportunities in some countries, and this can impact women's ability to contribute effectively to the family business and broader gender equality goals. Legal frameworks or cultural norms might limit women's rights, inheritance and property ownership, affecting their ability to engage fully in the family business and decision-making. Women might be under-represented in certain sectors or industries where family businesses operate. This can limit their access to networks, resources and mentorship opportunities. Like other businesses, family businesses may struggle with addressing gender pay gaps because of entrenched values and attitudes but also because of the imbalance of caregiving and its impact on the career advancement of women.

Lack of awareness and mindset changes are another challenge. Some family business owners might not fully recognise the importance of gender equality or may not be aware of the benefits it can bring to the business and society. Implementing gender equality initiatives may require changes in policies, practices and mindsets. Resistance to change, especially from traditional stakeholders, can hinder progress. The lack of resources in small to medium enterprises can

limit investment in gender equality programs, training and resources. This also extends to the potential lack of resources for measuring the impact of gender equality initiatives and determining their direct influence on business outcomes. Disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic can also have an impact on the resources of a family business to innovate and transform culture and processes around SDG#5.

Despite these challenges, family businesses can overcome them by leveraging their strengths, values and commitment to long-term sustainability. Engaging in partnerships, seeking external expertise, gradually implementing changes and aligning gender equity initiatives with core business values can help family businesses make meaningful contributions to SDG#5 while addressing the challenges they may encounter.

The Book Chapters

The book series aims to contribute positively to providing evidence of the role of family businesses in effectively contributing to the SDGs. The family business case studies display support and provide some evidence of how they embody the principles of an SDG in their operations, culture and/or business philosophy. This book is one of a 17 vignette book series in which each book is comprised of a set of short, easy-to-read family business cases related to the unique SDG being discussed in the book. The format of the book series allows the works to be accessible to those working in the field beyond academia such as family business practitioners, family business owners, family business advisors, government and business policymakers, members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), business associations and philanthropic centres, as well as to those who have a general interest in entrepreneurship and business.

The chapters in this book focus on businesses that have prioritised SDG#5 Gender Equality. The first chapter features Hacienda Las Flores, which is located in the city of Jutiapa in Honduras, Central America. Founded in 2011, it produces a unique collection of artisan and healthy chips made from natural ingredients without preservatives. It also uses 100% Honduran ingredients. Importantly for this chapter, the company was created by women and supports women in their personal and professional development. The authors are Karen Dubon who is the CEO and legal representative of Luna Inversiones (real estate) and Bay Island Harvest S de RL where the products of the Hacienda Las Flores and Paraiso brands are marketed and distributed. Silvia Paz is the CEO of Inversiones S y B S de RL (Hacienda Las Flores) since 2011. Dr Allan Discua Cruz is a member of the Pentland Center for Sustainability in Business and director of the Center for Family Business at Lancaster University Management School, United Kingdom.

The authors make the point in the chapter that the activities of women entrepreneurs and leaders in the creation and development of family businesses are often invisible and fraught with diverse paradoxes in Latin America. Despite this lack of visibility, women in Honduras have played a fundamental role in all social, economic and cultural aspects of the country and have become key actors

in the creation and continuity of family enterprises. This case aims to show that family businesses in Latin America can be part of the inclusion and empowerment of women through guidance based on SDGs, specifically SDG#5. The company aligns with SDG#5 through the economic empowerment of women, providing equal pay for women and ensuring women also benefit from the supply chain of their products. The company encourages collaborators to participate in local initiatives that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as motivational talks in schools and colleges.

The next chapter profiles a family business called Ballandean Estate Wines in Queensland, Australia. It is the oldest family-run winery in its local region and has passed the business on through five generations. Ballandean Estate Wines is home to two vineyards. Ballandean Estate, the original vineyard, is situated 800m above sea level and situated in Ballandean. In addition to selling wine as a product, Ballandean Estate Wines also offers an experience through the Cellar Door, as well as the barrel room. The family business proudly champions the women who lead the Ballandean Estate to where it is today. Within SDG#5 Gender Equality, target 5.5.2 is the proportion of women in managerial positions. This goal is evident within Ballandean Estate Wines which contributes positively to this target and has done so for generations. Over the generations, women in the family business have been leaders in the business. The women within the family note that they never felt like they couldn't do anything, be businesswomen or choose to work how they wanted to work. They commented that gender barriers never felt like a 'thing'.

The next family business profiled is the Stanglwirt in Austria. This company is an award-winning 5-star green spa hotel and includes a wellness resort located on its farm. The company is family-led and owned by the Hauser Family in the 10th generation and was founded in 1609. The Stanglwirt successfully integrates SDG#5 on gender equality and empowerment. The history of the Stanglwirt displays a unique tradition in female leadership and role models. Many managerial positions at the Stanglwirt are taken by women, and this is due to a shared understanding built based on mutual trust, teamwork and focusing on individuals' abilities rather than any other attribute, such as kinship. The Stanglwirt constitutes a best practice example for a family business that prioritises gender equality. At the Stanglwirt, the share of women in managerial positions is around 80%. Studies show that in Europe and North America, female managers amount to less than 40% on average ([United Nations, 2023](#)). The Stanglwirt is a leading family firm when it comes to the inclusion of female successors and managers. The authors of this chapter illustrate the values and position of the family business. They state that the company does not need to explicitly make gender equality a subject of discussion at the Stanglwirt as it is perceived as a natural component of the company's success. The Stanglwirt values confidence, trust and proactiveness, as put by one of the children. Hence today, the staff is naturally balanced according to their gender division.

The next chapter illustrates how gender equality and women's empowerment are exemplified in a small company called the Eather Group based in Australia. The company described is engaged in heavy haulage, earthmoving, material